

The Royal Priesthood

by John A. Brooks

The sermon explores the concept of the royal priesthood, highlighting the universal and necessary nature of the priestly function, and the qualifications, duties, and new order of priesthood in Christ.

Scripture: Luke 4:17, Acts 10:36, Ephesians 5:26, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 5:4, Hebrews 7:14, Hebrews 7:16, Hebrews 10:22

Topics: "Priestly Ministry", "Christian Redemption"

Description

John A. Brooks preaches about the priestly function being universal and timeless, bridging the gap between humanity and God. The necessity of mediation through a priest is deeply ingrained in human conscience, acknowledged by enlightened minds across different nations and ages. The priestly office, originating from divine revelation, signifies the basis of human redemption and the hope for a fallen world. The sermon delves into the historical development of priesthood from Melchisedec to the Levitical priesthood, culminating in the ultimate High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is anointed by God to serve as the Mediator of a better covenant and fulfill the priestly duties with perfection and authority.

Transcript

THE priestly function is not peculiar to any nation or age. Through the mediation of the priest, the human heart has ever intuitively sought to bridge the chasm between the holy One and fallen man. No effort of genius has ever taken, or can ever take, from the conscience of humanity the necessity of this mediation. It will not avail the skeptic to say it is a relic of the barbarous ages; for, alike with the roving tribes of Asia, and the ignorant hordes of Africa, the most enlightened minds of Europe and America have felt this truth and acknowledged its necessity. The false philosophies, sciences and civilizations of those ages have long since been discarded; but the combined efforts of infidelity, adorned by the greatest genius, and wielding the logic and rhetoric of every age, have only served to deepen this universal conviction.

Whence, then, the priestly office? Human wisdom could not have originated it; but, when once revealed, the necessities of man's fallen nature impelled him, intuitively and forever, to appropriate it. How one sinful creature can become the [402] sanctified and accepted mediator between his fellows and the just and holy One is far beyond the ken of human vision. But when that holy One, by His own will and ceremonial law, sanctifies to Himself a holy priesthood, the heart intuitively accepts it as the divine basis of human redemption, and hence the only hope of a lost and fallen world.

The first intimation of a priesthood that we have in the word of God is in connection with him whose order was destined to become illustrious throughout the cycles of time. Melchisedec is called "king of Salem,

and priest of the most high God"--a royal priest to whom even Abraham paid tithes. Again, in the days of Joseph, we read of Potipherah, priest of On, or Heliopolis, in Egypt; and of the priests generally, as a distinct and greatly honored class in that country. Afterward, we read of "Jethro, priest of Midian, "who so kindly received and entertained the future lawgiver of Israel. During all this period, we find no divine statute consecrating any family or class to the priestly order. Nor was the sacerdotal office reckoned among the rights of primogeniture, as some suppose. These the Scripture itself limits to pre-eminence among the brethren, and a double portion of the inheritance (1 Chron. 5:1-4). In the patriarchal age, while no one was forbidden the altar, yet the father, by common consent, and of right, as the head of the family, stood before God and interceded in behalf of his children. As [403] families grew into nations, kings, as national heads, and for the same reasons, sometimes, and especially upon great festive occasions, performed priestly duties. But we are not to conclude, from all this, that God did not signify His choice and divine acceptance of His faithful priests, else whence the glory and renown of Melchisedec, not only among his own people, but among all the nations of Asia? By His providences, God had marked him as the "blessed of the Lord," "the priest of the most high God." During this dispensation every man could build his own altar, and offer thereon his sacrifices. There was no tabernacle, with its consecrated altar, upon which all sacrifices must be offered. The humble worshiper of God might build his altar upon Ararat, in the grove of Mamre, or in the vale of Shechem, and offer there his sacrifices.

But, in the lapse of time, the tabernacle is spread, and the brazen altar erected. God has chosen a people from among the nations of the earth, and a new order of priesthood must be consecrated, in harmony with the divine economy now established. Jehovah proposed now to dwell in person among His people, to manifest His presence in the house to be built for Him. It was proper that the house in which God should dwell should be built in accordance with His own designs; hence Moses built it exactly after the pattern shown him in the mount. But now that the tabernacle [404] is set up, the glory of God is descended upon it, and His Shekinah is within, whose feet shall now tread those sacred precincts, consecrated by the glory of His presence? Evidently only His chosen and consecrated priesthood. Of the twelve tribes, He chose that of Levi to minister to Him, and for the people, in sacred things; and, from this tribe, the family of Aaron to officiate in the tabernacle.

It is foreign to our present purpose to institute any inquiry as to the reason of Jehovah's choice. Suffice it to say that the same God who called Israel from the nations, also called out of Israel this tribe and family, and consecrated them to the priestly office.

To this priestly order, then, as the type of another and more enduring one, we invite attention for a time.

First: Their qualifications. The purity, perfection and holiness of their calling were indicated by all the outward and bodily ceremonies of the law concerning the priesthood. Everything tended to impress the fact that they were separated from the world--set apart to God. 1. They were to have no bodily defilements whatever. Only a perfect and unblemished body could stand before the Lord. 2. They were to serve in the tabernacle only during the strength and vigor of manhood. Neither the feebleness of childhood, nor old age, was tolerated within its holy precincts. 3. They were to avoid every occasion of bodily defilement, such as [405] contact with the dead, except in cases of near relationship; cutting and disfiguring the beard, as in times of mourning; marrying a woman of bad fame, or one that had been divorced; and the high priest, as being in his own person the most sacred, was still further restricted, in that he was not to defile himself even for his father and mother, and should marry only a virgin. 4. Their garments of white linen, promoting cleanliness, as the use of them always does, indicated purity of life hence, the white garments of the heavenly inhabitants are, in the language of revelation, expressly declared to mean "the

righteousness of saints." For this reason, also, the pure white robes worn by the high priest on the day of atonement are called the "garments of holiness," and upon his mitre was written, "Holiness to the Lord."

Second: Their consecration. They were taken to the door of the tabernacle, and their bodies washed in the waters of the laver, the priestly garments put upon them, and their heads anointed with oil--the washing in the cleansing element of water again indicating purity of soul and life, and the anointing with oil declaring them to be chosen of God and consecrated to His service. But all these external purifications only served to reveal to them the immeasurable distance between themselves and the holy One, in whose presence they were about to stand. They were now, in some degree at least, prepared to comprehend the [406] necessity for the blood of atonement. This again was provided in such a manner as not only to impress them with its necessity, but also with a vivid consciousness of the absolute purity of those who would serve at the altar of Jehovah. "For first of all there was presented, for the expiation of sin, the bullock of sin-offering, of which nothing save a little fat was offered (on the altar), because the offerers were not yet worthy to have any gift or offering accepted by God. But after they had been so far purged, they slew the burnt-offering to God, which was wholly laid upon the altar. And after this came a sacrifice, like a peace-offering (which was wont to be divided between God, the priest, and the offerers), showing that they were now so far received into favor with God that they might eat at His table." The blood of the victim was then sprinkled upon the altar and the priest, indicating that God accepted the life (in the blood) of the animal slain, instead of his own; the blood also was sprinkled upon his right ear, hand and foot, consecrating the ear to hear the commands of God, the hand to extend offerings unto Him, the foot to tread the holy precincts of His court, and hasten in the ways of His righteousness. Now, to complete the consecration, the oil and blood, commingled, were sprinkled upon him, signifying that their consecrating and cleansing influence would ever be present with him, so long as he obeyed the commandments of God. Thus, [407] every ceremonial act of consecration displays the holiness of the infinite One, and, at the same time, discovers the woeful depths of human degradation. Here, too, the boundless grace and mercy of God are ever present in the blood of atonement, but only attained through a priesthood consecrated in every respect as the infinite Father has directed.

Third: The duties of the priesthood. The tribe of Levi received no lot with the other tribes, but was wholly consecrated to the work of the Lord. To this tribe, while sojourning in the wilderness, was given in charge the tabernacle. Around it they encamped at night, and bore its various parts when traveling in the day. When, at last, they became located in Judea, it was their duty to prepare all things necessary for the temple worship, and to teach the law to the people, among whom they were located, and by whom they were supported. But to the priests were confined the duties of the sanctuary. They were the mediators between God and the people. Theirs was the duty to offer the various offerings of the ceremonial law, to officiate at the morning and evening sacrifices, and, upon the occasion of all national festivals, to keep in order all things about the temple, and unfold the law to the people. (Lev. 10:11; 33:10; Mal. 2:7.) The high priest alone entered the Most Holy Place once a year, to make atonement for the sins of the people. [408]

To the most casual observer there are, in the Jewish priesthood, evident imperfections. The high priest himself needed a mediator. With his people he had sinned, and, like them, he needed a sin-offering. Separated from the people, a priest unto God, and yet himself in need of a priest. Propitiating the divine favor in behalf of Israel, and yet himself standing in the presence of God, only through the boundless grace of His infinite love. The offerings, too, were equally imperfect. No philosophy, human or divine, can demonstrate how it is possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins, or how the blood of an innocent victim can propitiate Deity. But these are imperfections that must ever attach to all merely human

priesthoods. The divine wisdom alone can supply the deficiency. The consciousness of this fact laid hold upon the sweet Psalmist of Israel when he said: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of throe enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou host the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." In this, and other Jewish Scriptures, a new order of priesthood is plainly indicated. Still, strange to say, [409] this pretension to the priestly function is the very rock over which the Jews stumbled when they crucified the Lord of glory, and which ever after proved a stumbling-block to many Hebrew Christians.

Against these claims of the Christ, two grave objections presented themselves to the Jewish mind: 1. Coming of Judah's tribe, how can he be a priest of Aaron's order? 2. If not of that order, then His is a new one, and without authority. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, meets these difficulties. He frankly admits that Christ could not belong to the Levitical priesthood; for "he sprang from Juda, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning the priesthood" (Heb. 7:14). Besides, if, on earth, He could not minister at that altar, seeing there is a distinct order appointed by the law, and this order is taken from another tribe (Hebrews 8), by what right, then, does He claim to be a priest? By divine right--the call of God Himself, the apostle replies. "No one takes this honor to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron also was called. So also the Christ did not take upon himself the honor of becoming a high priest; but he gave him this honor who said to him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. As he says also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 5:4-6). Again: "He is made a priest, not according to the law of fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For [410] he testifies, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 7:16, 17). Again "He is made such by the oath of the living God, which cannot be said of Aaron's order." Thus, from their own Scriptures, he demonstrates the necessity for another order of priesthood. These Scriptures find their fulfillment in Christ, and the order in which He is high priest.

This new order, while in many particulars it resembles the former, yet in its essential characteristics is altogether superior to it. It is a royal priesthood. This high priest is possessed of power and authority. We no longer listen for the sound of the bells upon His robes to assure us that He lives while standing in the midst of the Shekinah of God. His is an unchangeable priesthood, and He lives and abides forever to make intercession for the saints.

Made a priest by the "oath of God," and "the power of an endless life," He entered upon His official duties, not because of lineal descent, but because of the eternal fitness of things. In His person the necessary defects of the former priesthood are done away. He alone of all born of women is spotlessly pure. He alone can stand with unveiled face in the sanctum sanctorum of the universe. Sinless, He needs no sin-offering for Himself, no priest to stand between Him and His Father in heaven. What a glorious high priest is this--our Brother, tempted as we are tempted, [411] and yet without sin; and, also, our Redeemer and King, who lives and abides forever! Nor does He enter the Most Holy Place without the blood of atonement; yet, not the blood of bulls and goats, which can not cleanse from sin, but by His own precious blood, shed for the remission of the sins of many. Thus the divine wisdom has presented a perfect mediation through the son of Mary--the Son of God--as human as His mother, as divine as His Father--a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

Now, since in Him we "live, and move, and have our being," and our "life is hid with Christ in God," we, too, are royal priests with Him; having been consecrated and brought near to God, "an holy priesthood, to offer

up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," we are constituted in Him "a chosen race, a royal priesthood." O Christ, Thou art He who "hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us to our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth."

To conclude the argument, the apostle declares that to have been simply the type of this, the services of the Jewish tabernacle only "copies" of the things in the heavens. To this typical relation we invite attention for a time:

1. As the people of Israel could approach their God only through the mediation of Aaron and his [412] sons, so now we can only come to God through Jesus the Christ. Thus has God ordained; and the result of Korah's rebellion should teach the Roman priest the infamy of his pretension, and the inevitable doom that awaits him. Christ is the one Mediator, and no man can come to God but through Him.
2. The sacrifices, consecrations, garments, purifications by water and blood were all typical of the personal holiness of Christ, only His was not acquired, but original, inherent holiness. He was the "lamb without spot or blemish," covered from His youth with a spotless garment of righteousness.
3. The high priest, entering the Most Holy Place with the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast, typified Christ entering heaven, bearing His people upon His heart before the throne of God.
4. The clear and perfect revelation of the Father's will was prefigured by the Urim and Thummim of the Jewish high priest, "through which the priesthood gave auricular decisions in regard to the things of God." In short, the covenant of Sinai was typical of a better covenant, and all the ceremonies of the tabernacle service "copies of the things in the heavens" (Hebrews 9 and 10).

We conclude, then, with great confidence, that the consecration and anointing of the Aaronic priesthood was typical of the consecration and [413] anointing of the Christian priesthood. It would be strange, indeed, if it were not so. That which preceded and which came after the anointing was typical; then, why not the anointing itself? Indeed, the "various immersions" spoken of by the apostle in this chapter constitute a part of the consecrating ceremony.

We have already invited attention to the order of consecration peculiar to the Jewish priesthood. They were washed in the laver, their garments put upon them, their heads anointed with oil, the sacrifices offered, and the consecration completed by the blood of sprinkling.

For the fulfillment of all righteousness, whether exhibited in positive commands, or in the shadows of the law, the body of Christ was washed in the laver of baptism, and, the heavens opening, He was anointed Prophet, Priest and King by the descending Spirit of God. Unlike Aaron, He needed no sprinkling of blood upon Himself. One with the Father, He had no divine favor to propitiate. Sinless, He had no guilt to cleanse, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, to make atonement for the human family. Christ was anointed Priest at His baptism.

Against these conclusions the following objections will be urged:

1. An objection based upon Heb. 7:11-14: "If, then, there had been a perfect expiation by means [414] of the Levitical priesthood (for with reference to it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should be raised up after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? It is evident that, when the priesthood is changed, there is of necessity also a change of the law.

For he of whom these things are said belongs to another tribe, from which no one attended upon the altar. For it is very clear that our Lord sprang from Juda, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning the priesthood." There can be no valid objection based upon this passage. Some of the Jewish Christians taught that the law of Moses had not been abrogated, and was therefore binding still upon all the followers of Christ. Paul meets this declaration by pointing to their own Scriptures, which declared that God would raise up a "new order" of priesthood. That Christ was a priest, they themselves acknowledged; but that He could not belong to the Levitical priesthood was evident, for He came from the wrong tribe, but is, rather, a royal priest after the order of Melchisedec. Hence, the priesthood being changed, there is of necessity a change of the law. This is the logical conclusion of the apostle. That He was a priest then is conclusively demonstrated. This, and no more, upon that question.

2. Heb. 8:1-7: "Now, concerning the things that have been spoken, the principal point is this: [415] We have such a high priest, who has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the holy places, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices, wherefore, it is necessary that this one also have something which he may offer. For if he were on earth, he could not be a priest; because there are priests who offer gifts according to the law: and these serve the copy and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle. See now, says he, that you make all things according to the pattern shown you in the mount. But now he has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which is established with reference to better promises."

The apostles, in this context, declared the tabernacle erected by Moses to be "the copy and shadow of heavenly things"; that Christ serves "a minister of the holy places, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man." He does not serve in the former, and if He were on earth He could not be a priest in that line and serve in that tabernacle. But why not? Because there are already priests that offer gifts according to the law. This Christ could not do if on earth, for, as we have already seen, He does not come from the right tribe. Hence the conclusion: He has obtained [416] a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is the, Mediator of a better covenant, which is established with reference to better promises. This is clearly the logical import of the apostle's argument, and beyond this we can not legitimately press the interpretation.

3. Heb. 1:9: "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." This prophecy the apostle applies directly to the Saviour; and, indeed, it is applicable to none other. If it be said that the anointing was completed even when the prophecy was first uttered, the conclusion is fatal to the objector. If, as it most certainly was, the anointing was yet a future event, then this passage does not throw any light upon the time and place of the anointing, and hence the objection based upon it is invalid.

4. Acts 2:36: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This passage simply forms the conclusion of a grand argument in demonstration of the Messiahship, which the apostle has just completed, but the time and place of the anointing the context does not determine.

5. Finally, it is urged that He did not begin at once to officiate as priest, and could not until [417] the Jewish sacrifices had ceased. This we readily grant, but the conclusion does not affect the fact that He was anointed priest at His baptism. Time, indeed, elapsed between the anointing and the beginning of the official work, but the Old Testament Scriptures abound in illustrations entirely similar. The Lord sent Elijah from Horeb, on the way to the wilderness of Damascus, to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; Jehu, the son of Nimshi, to be king over Israel; and Elisha to be prophet in his stead. Elijah faithfully fulfilled the commands of the Lord, but long years supervened before either of these anointed ones began his official work. It was at least seven years after this before Elijah was taken up to heaven, and left his mantle with Elisha; and it was, probably, twice that time before the death of the kings of Syria and Israel gave room for Hazael and Jehu to assume the scepters of their respective kingdoms. Long years of trials, likewise, intervened after the son of Jesse was anointed king, before the shepherd of Bethlehem assumed the royal purple. So with his illustrious antitype, "the Prince of the house of David." He was anointed at His baptism, but three years of bitter trial had passed away when He began His work as priest; and the rending of the veil indicated the abolishment of the Levitical priesthood.

In confirmation of this proposition, we submit the following proofs: [418]

1. Luke 4:17-21: "And the volume of Isaiah the prophet was given to him: and when he had unrolled the volume, he found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. . . . And he began to say to them, This scripture which you have heard is this day fulfilled."

Here the Master declares Himself to be already anointed to do a work which necessarily involved the priestly function. That is, "to heal the brokenhearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed;" but without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, no such thing as setting free the oppressed or giving liberty to the captives. Hence, we conclude, with positive certainty, that He had, in this early period of His ministry, been anointed to offer the sacrifice of atonement, to shed His blood for the remission of the sins of many; but only a priest can accomplish this work.

2. Acts 10:36-38: "The word which he sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ [He is the Lord of all]: that word, you know, which was published through the whole of Judea, [419] beginning from Galilee, after the immersion that John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power." The "word" sent to the sons of Israel, and which was published through the whole of Judea, was that God had anointed Jesus. But where was this "word" published? It began in Galilee, after John's immersion. Why had it not been proclaimed before? Because God had not before anointed Him. Why proclaimed just after John's immersion? Because at His immersion He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. This is absolutely certain, and since there is not a single intimation, in all the Book, of any other anointing, we conclude that He was here anointed Prophet, Priest and King.

3. In his confession Peter said: "Thou art the Anointed, the Son of the living God"--the Prophet, Priest and King. Thou art the Anointed; not will be, but art now. This is simply exhaustive. There can be no other anointed one, no other anointing. "Upon this truth I will build my church." But if the priestly function constitutes no part of that truth, then his priestly relation constitutes no part of the foundation. Hence we conclude again that He was the anointed priest.

4. "I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Jesus said to him, You have said." Under oath He affirmed Himself the [420] Anointed of God, the Prophet, Priest and King. This ought to be conclusive.

5. Into the first tabernacle the high priest went not until he was anointed, and then not without blood (Hebrews 9). Even so the Anointed entered the Most Holy Place, not without the blood of atonement, which He sprinkled upon the mercy-seat. But only the consecrated and anointed priest of God could have offered that spotless lamb, or stood with the "blood of sprinkling" in the presence of the eternal One. We conclude, then, that Christ was anointed priest at His baptism, and began His work as such when He offered Himself upon the cross, and with His own blood entered the heavens to make atonement for the sins of the world.

We have already seen that all the service of the first tabernacle was typical of the service in the true. In the former service the high priest was washed in the brazen laver, his priestly garments put upon him, his head anointed with oil, and then declared symbolically sanctified by the sprinkling of the blood of atonement. In the true tabernacle services, our great High Priest was washed in the laver of baptism, and anointed by the Spirit of God descending upon Him. He needed no robes of righteousness, for these had ever been around Him, nor did He need any sprinkling of the blood of atonement, for sinless He stood in the presence of the universe. [421]

That the washing of the laver was typical of baptism is, we think, demonstrable, if the whole service of the tabernacle was a type of the Christian economy. Altars in that dispensation were typical of altars in this; sacrifices of sacrifices; blood of blood; sprinklings of sprinklings; pourings of pourings; and washings of washings. In that dispensation, blood, or its substitute (ashes mingled with water), was sprinkled upon the parties to be cleansed. Water alone was never sprinkled upon any one by divine authority. So now, in the New Testament, we read of the sprinkling of blood (Heb. 10:22; 12:24), but never of water. There also the blood was poured out upon Calvary for the sins of the world. In that economy their bodies were washed wholly in water; so now in this also. In that the oil of anointing was poured on Aaron's head, and ran down upon his beard, even upon his garment; so in this the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Christ without measure, "anointing him with the oil of gladness above his fellows."

Again: That the washing of the laver was typical of baptism is positively affirmed by Dr. Fairbairn, of Glasgow, the greatest of all expounders of Scriptural types. In proof of the proposition he quotes the following (Heb. 10:22) "Having their bodies washed in pure water," "where [he says] the symbolic language is entirely retained." Again (Tit. 3:5), "The washing [422] of regeneration," and (Eph. 5:26), "Sanctified and cleansed by the washing of water, by the word."

As Aaron was inducted into the priestly office, so were all the Levitical priests. We also are a "royal priesthood," "kings and priests" with Christ. As He was consecrated and anointed, even so we also should be consecrated.

He was washed--went down into the Jordan, and came up out of it again. We also must be washed. But we, being sinners, must have put on the priestly robes of righteousness, without which we could not officiate at the altar; but "he is our righteousness," hence "as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." In both dispensations the candidate attained to his priestly robes through the washings of the laver, and by baptism, respectively.

Again: As in the former service all things were cleansed by blood, so, in this, "we come to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel;" but when do we come to this "sprinkling of blood"? Certainly not until we come into the death of Christ. "Know you not that as many of you as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him, by baptism into death." The Jewish priest passed through the washing of the laver to the sprinkling, we through the waters of baptism; hence, "draw near with a [423] true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Finally, as Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit after baptism, so we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit after baptism. Christ went down into Jordan, and came up out of it. The force of His example is deeply felt by the religious world, hence the constant effort made to break it. Christ's baptism, we are told, is no example to us, for, unlike us, He had no sins to be forgiven. True, but He was to become our great High Priest, and this, in harmony with the fulfillment of all righteousness, could not be, unless His body was first washed in the laver of baptism.

Are we, then, consecrated priests? If not, how dare we officiate at the altar? Have our bodies been washed in the laver of baptisms? Have we gone down into the tide and come up out of it as did the Saviour? If not, let the fate of Korah and his companions be a warning to us. If, in the type, men perished because they approached the altar without consecration, how much greater their punishment in the antitype!

Christ's immersion is then, indeed, an example to us. Then, let me stand, like the blessed Saviour, on "Jordan's strand"; yea, let me put my feet in the tracks He left in its yielding sands; like Him, lie beneath its liquid wave, and rise with Him, a royal "priest for ever." [424]

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